PARENTING ROLES AND EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE IN WOMEN OFFENDERS: REVIEW OF THE OFFENDER INTAKE ASSESSMENTS

by

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore and outline trends regarding parenting roles and experiences of abuse among women offenders, based on the data available in the Domain Comments sections of women's Offender Intake Assessments (OIA). To the extent that it was possible, available data for this study were categorized according to the presentation of findings on similar issues from the *Survey of Federally Sentenced Women (FSW)* which was completed in 1990 (Shaw et al, 1990). This allowed rough comparisons of some of the results of the two studies. Given that the findings from the *Survey* represented the basis for some of the recommendations on women's parenting roles and experiences of abuse outlined in *"Creating Choices: Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women"* a follow-up and monitoring of general trends in these issues for a different sample of women offenders seemed relevant in order to gain a better understanding of future research and programming needs.

The *Survey of Federally Sentenced Women* consisted of interviewing 170 women offenders with the intent to "... assess the views of the women themselves on the experiences of imprisonment, their need for programs and services, and on where and under what conditions they might prefer to serve their sentences" (Shaw et al, 1990, p.1). One of the main issues arising from the results of the *Survey* was that two thirds of the women who were mothers had also been primary

careproviders for their children. A primary source of distress and pain for women was the fact that they were separated from their children. Since at the time of the *Survey* there was only one federal institution for women - the Prison for Women (PFW) at Kingston - many women were then geographically distant from their families, and the difficulties and costs of transportation made it hard to maintain contact. Moreover, the women reported that the conditions in the institution were unsuitable for visits with their children.

The *Survey* also found that an extremely high proportion of the women had experienced abuse, either during childhood or adulthood, or in some cases, throughout their entire lives. Its findings showed that "... 82% of the women in PFW had been either physically or sexually abused and 72% of those in the provinces" (Shaw et al., 1990, p.30). Approximately two thirds of women expressed an interest in taking part in programs on abuse. However, in spite of the need to deal with these experiences, the *Survey* showed that at the time, there were not enough programs specifically designed to assist women in the healing process.

It is almost impossible to find a study on women offenders that does not highlight the issues of mothering and the experiences of abuse. Both topics are identified in the literature as primarily "women's issues." However, there are certain aspects of these issues that make incarcerated women unique compared to "other" women and they merit specific attention. Incarcerated mothers are separated from their children, which affects their mother-role and may have a

wide-ranging impact on both the women and their families/children. Studies indicate that separation from children due to incarceration creates tremendous pain in women, which can seriously affect their well-being (Hairston, 1992; Heney, 1996; Shaw et al., 1990; Wine, 1992). Some women may choose not to contact their children because of the stigma associated with being in prison and because they find conditions in the institution unsuitable for children (Hairston, 1992; Shaw et al., 1990). They may worry and express concern for the well-being of their children at their new "home." In many instances, women's parents, who are often elderly and facing their own difficulties, become the primary careproviders for their grandchildren (Bloom, 1992; Shaw et al., 1990). Some careproviders have reported that having a child to look after affects their financial situation, which may result in children not receiving appropriate care (Bloom, 1992). These are all issues that a mother who is incarcerated - regardless of the extent to which she may be in contact with her child - is aware of, and which may represent a source of great stress for her.

Children whose mothers are incarcerated may experience greater changes in their daily lives than those whose fathers are serving sentences in correctional institutions. If the mother was the sole careprovider for her children, then it means that the children lose not only their primary careprovider, but they most likely also have to change residences, and perhaps schools and friends (Stanton, 1980; Watson, 1995; Wine, 1992; Woodrow, 1992). However, not all women are the

primary careproviders of their children prior to incarceration. Some women have given up custody or have lost custody of their children even prior to incarceration (Golberg et al, 1997; Shaw et al., 1990). In other instances, they may have made informal arrangements with family members to take on the everyday care of their children. Nonetheless, the fact that some women did not live full-time with their children prior to incarceration does not automatically mean that they did not maintain contact with children, nor that they would not be affected by the reduced contact that they may have due to incarceration .

Finally, it should be mentioned that as with any "other" women, not every woman who experiences problems with the law and becomes incarcerated is necessarily invested in the mother role; some may simply not want to take on this responsibility. Some feminists have argued that the social construction of the mother-role stems from androcentric ideology and may in many ways be oppressive and marginalizing for women and represent a "burden" for the mother (Allen, 1984; Moody-Adams, 1997; Purdy, 1997; Valeska, 1984). On the other hand, other feminists (Garcia Coll et al., 1988; Ruddick, 1984; Whitback, 1986) note that beyond, or in spite of, the oppressive structures of patriarchal society that shape gender socialization, there are intrinsic and specific values of being a mother, of nurturing and caring, that are of tremendous importance for women. As the title of Garcia Coll, Surrey and Weingarten's (1998) book suggests, there are certain values and mechanisms that keep many women "Mothering Against the

Odds" (1998). Feminists' analyses of motherhood highlight the importance of recognizing the complexity of the issue and the multi-layered experiences and perspectives that mothers who are incarcerated may face.

The fact that compared to the general population, the proportion of women offenders who experienced abuse is much higher (Laishes, 1997) indicates the extent to which issues of abuse are also of central relevance for this population. These experiences affect women's lives at every level. Some authors have associated women's experiences of abuse with their chances of coming into conflict with the law (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Comack, 1996; Shaw et al., 1990; Widom, 1989, quoted in Pollock, 1996). Other studies have focused primarily on the mental health issues that stem from childhood as well as adulthood experiences of abuse and the numerous difficulties that may be related to it. For example, in order to cope with intense and overwhelming feelings associated with abuse, survivors may develop emotional numbness (Comack, 1996; Herman 1992), suicidal feelings or inability to discuss feelings (Heney, 1996), or addictions and depression (Lundy, 1991; Miller et. al, 1993; Morrow & Smith, 1995; Prather & Minkow, 1991; Windle et. al., 1994). Finally, some studies bring to light the extent to which women's experiences of prison may be shaped by their previous experiences of abuse. The controlling aspects of incarceration can revive women's experiences of abuse and feelings of loss of control and power over their lives (Heney, 1996; Pollack, 1993; Vallee & Cadieux,1995). On the other hand, it has

also been documented that, in view of the extremely difficult and appalling circumstances of their lives on the "outside," some women felt "sheltered" and "protected" in prison (Arbour, 1996; Heney, 1996, Vallee & Cadieux, 1995).

Based on the findings of the *Survey*, as well as other studies specifically designed and conducted to capture incarcerated women's experiences and needs, *"Creating Choices: Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women"* emerged in 1990. Embedded in a women-centered approach, this document outlined recommendations for change with respect to the programs, services, and facilities for women offenders. The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) undertook subsequent changes by establishing four regional institutions and a healing lodge for Aboriginal women offenders. One of the goals of this undertaking was to allow incarcerated women to be geographically closer to their children, families and homes. The facilities were specially designed to enable women's daily living environment to reflect community standards (Correctional Service of Canada, 1992, p.34), to provide more "home-like" settings for visits by children and family members, and to allow women to have their infants or toddlers live with them in the facility. Currently there are some children who live at the facility full-time with their mothers. Moreover, programs aimed at empowering women and responding to their specific needs as outlined in the *"Creating Choices"* (such as parenting programs, programs dealing with issues of abuse,

Peer Support Program, etc.), were developed and implemented in the new facilities.

It has been almost ten years since the *Survey of Federally Sentenced Women* (Shaw et al., 1990) was conducted. The *OIAs Review* study presented here was undertaken to monitor and update the treatment of issues that are particularly salient for women offenders, such as mothering and histories of abuse. OIAs of the 426 women were reviewed and the data coded in such a way that would allow to the extent possible, comparisons with the results and information provided by the *Survey*.

Due to the different methods used in the two studies, there are clear limitations to comparing the findings of the *Survey* and of this *OIAs Review*. The *Survey* was based on individual interviews with women offenders with the aim of collecting data and assessing specific areas of their lives. The purpose of the OIA, on the other hand, is to provide an "initial 'snapshot' of the woman" upon her admission into an institution, and to "identify need and risk factors," whereas "in-depth testing and assessment (of her needs) was to be done by specific program providers" (Correctional Program Strategy for Federally Sentenced Women, 1994, p.13).

Thus, given that OIA interview was not specifically designed to systematically collect data and assess issues of interest to this study, it is clear that the extent to which these data were recorded in women's OIAs may be primarily

dependent on women's spontaneous disclosures. Furthermore, women's decisions to disclose this information, particularly in relation to their possible experiences of abuse, may vary tremendously due to many factors. For example, a woman may not feel comfortable disclosing this type of information during the OIA interview, she may not even remember experiences of abuse or, it is possible, the notion of "abuse" may vary considerably, and thus what some may perceive as abuse, others may not. However, it is important to keep in mind that the absence of naming or indicating these experiences does not necessarily mean that a woman did not experience them.

METHOD

Sample

The sample used for this study consisted of 426 women who were admitted to one of the federal women's institutions between January 1, 1996 and March 31, 1998, and whose Offender Intake Assessments contained Domain Comments. The average age was 32.4, the youngest being 18 and the oldest 62. In terms of racial or ethnic background, the sample consisted of 20.7% Aboriginal women, 2.3% Asian women, 14.1% Black women, 52% Caucasian women, 5.6% reported other, and for 5% the information on racial or ethnic origin was missing.

Data Sources

Offender Intake Assessment is an evaluation tool applied to every offender at the time of his/her admission to federal custody. It consists of two main components: Criminal Risk Assessment and Case Needs Identification and Analysis. The Case Needs component consists of seven need domains: employment, marital/family, associates/social interaction, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional orientation and attitude (Motiuk, 1997). Each domain is characterized by certain principal components which consist of a number of indicators. OIA also has Domain Comments sections for each need domain, which consist of additional information about the offender with regard to the specific domain (employment, marital/family, etc.). All of the

information in the OIA is entered by the primary worker, based on the interview with the offender as well as other sources.

The OIA is an assessment instrument that is applied to both male and female offenders, and therefore may not capture specific information relevant to the female population. As a result, the "Federally Sentenced Women Facilities Offender Intake Assessment Content Guidelines" (1996) were developed in order to obtain additional information of particular relevance to women that are to be recorded in the Domain Comments. It is these Domain Comments that represented the source of information for this study. Of particular relevance were those aspects that referred to women's caregiving roles and experiences of abuse. With respect to the issue of abuse, the aforementioned guidelines provided instructions to record "any information regarding the offender being the victim of sexual abuse " (p.15) or "experiences of violence or abuse that a woman can recall" (p.17). It also provided guidelines for recording information on women's mother-role, such as who is caring for her children during incarceration, whether she has contact with them, etc. (p.16). It is important to mention that there has not been any formal verification to date by CSC on the consistency and the way in which these guidelines are being applied in the field, which may affect the extent to which this information is recorded in particular OIAs' Domain Comments.

Procedure

Names of all women who were admitted to federal institutions in the period between January 1, 1996 and March, 31, 1998 (N=718) were extracted from the Offender Management System (OMS) in order to examine their OIA information. OIAs were not found for 243 women. There were an additional 49 women whose OIAs did not contain Domain Comments, excluding them from the present review. Thus, the total number of women whose OIAs contained the required information was 426. The information in the OIAs of these 426 women was coded using the guide provided in Appendix A. This coding guide was specifically designed for the purposes of this study and it was developed in such a way that it would capture, as much as possible, the issues of parenting and abuse as outlined and presented in the *Survey*. This allowed for a rough comparison of the findings despite the limitations imposed by the different methods of data collection. Additional descriptions of the categories used and the process of coding will be provided in the Results section as it is necessary to delineate the context of the results in order to shed light on their meaning within the applied method and available data sources.

The study was undertaken between November 1998 and January 1999. The OIAs written in English (N= 347) were reviewed by the author of this report, while those written in French (N=79) were reviewed by Minhtri Truong, M. A., an independent researcher. In order to determine inter-rater consistency, both

researchers coded the same 20 OIAs written in English, given that Mr. Truong is proficient in both languages. Both researchers agreed that variables such as women's age and motherhood status were self-evident, therefore only those variables where some interpretation was needed by the researcher were subjected to inter-rater analyses. Kappa measures of agreement were calculated for types of childhood/adolescent and adulthood experiences and childcare arrangements. They ranged from .47 to .72 indicating a fair to good agreement (SPSS Inc., 1996, p.82). Coding examples are provided in Appendix B.

RESULTS

Parenting/Childcare Responsibility

Number of Women with Children

It was noted in the *Survey* that the "number of women with children" referred to "natural children who are alive" (p.10). The *Survey* further stated that not all of those children "were dependent upon their mothers," and that some may have been "adopted out at birth and others are adults" (p.11). For these reasons, this category seemed to include women from the sample of the *OIAs Review* who gave birth to at least one child, and whose child is alive (N=325). Among women in this study, 332 gave birth. However, in the case of seven women none of their children were living and therefore these women were included in the category "women with no children".

Table 1
Number of Women with Children

	Survey of FSW (N=169)[a]		OIAs Review (N=400)[b]	
	n	%	n	%
Women with at least one child	109	(64.5)	325	(81.2)
Women with no children	60	(35.5)	75	(18.8)

Note. [a] In the *Survey* information was missing for 1 woman.
[b] In the *OIA Review*, information was missing for 26 women.

Table 1 shows that the majority of women have had children in both data sets. More specifically, 64.5% of the *Survey* sample and 81.2% of the *OIAs*

Review gave birth to one child or more. In the latter study, there was a greater proportion of women who had at least one child and the difference between the two samples was statistically significant [($\chi 2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 569) = 19.36, $\underline{p}$ > .001)].

Age and number of children

Table 2 shows the proportion of women who had at least one child in a particular age group. In order to allow for comparison, specific age groups that were used here were those presented in the *Survey*. However, it should be noted that the *Survey* did not provide a precise description of the categories "with at least one child 5 and under and not adopted" and "with at least one child 16 and under and not adopted." Therefore, it is not clear whether all women who had only children 5 years old or younger, were also subsumed under the category "with at least one child 16 and under and not adopted" since the categories are not mutually exclusive. It is assumed for the present analyses, however, that the categories were intended to be mutually exclusive, given that otherwise, the category of women with at least one child 5 years old or younger would be redundant. In the *OIAs Review*, therefore, if a woman had one or more children aged 5 or under, she was placed only in the category of women "with at least one child 5 and under and not adopted."

Table 2
Number of Women with Children According to Children's Ages

	Survey of FSW (N=169)[a]		OIAs Review (N=351)[b]	
	n	%	n	%
Women with at least one child 5 or under & not adopted	41	(24.2)	112	(31.9)
Women with at least one child 16 or under & not adopted	81	(47.9)	148	(42.2)
Women with all children 17 and older	20	(11.8)	35	(10.0)

Note. In the first two categories, a woman may be represented more than once.
[a] In the *Survey,* information for 1 woman was missing.
[b] In the *OIAs Review,* information for 75 women was missing: for 49 women, information on all of their children's ages was missing, and for 26 women, there was no information on whether they had children.

There was no significant difference [($\chi 2$ (1, N = 521) = 3.74, n.s.)] between the proportion of women who had at least one child 5 or under and not adopted in the *Survey* (47.9%) and in the *OIAs Review* (42.2%). Similarly, the two samples did not differ [($\chi 2$ (1, N = 521) = 1.18, n.s.)] in regards to the proportion of women who had at least one child 16 or under and not adopted. Given that the main interest was to explore the proportion of women with at least one minor child, the between-group difference was not tested in respect to the number of women whose children were all 17 or older. Information was missing for 17.6% of women in the *OIAs Review* study (N=75), and for that reason the proportion of women who had

at least one child in a particular age group, as presented in Table 2, represents an approximation of the true value.

Table 3 shows the total number of children for women in both samples. It is clear that most of the women who were mothers had more than one child. In many instances, their children were of different age groups and for that reason a number of women are represented more than once in Table 3.

Table 3
Number of Children

	Survey of FSW (N=168)[a]		OIAs Review (N=383)[b]	
	n	%	n	%
0	60	(35.7)	75	(19.6)
1	31	(18.5)	78	(20.4)
2	37	(22.0)	94	(24.5)
3	18	(10.7)	69	(18.0)
4	10	(5.9)	35	(9.1)
5	10	(5.9)	20	(5.2)
6 and more	2	(1.2)	12	(3.1)

Note. [a] In the *Survey* information for 2 women was missing: for one woman there was no information whether she had children, and for another one, information on the number of children she had was missing. [b] In the *OIAs Review,* information for 43 women was missing: whether a woman had children was not available for 26, and for 17, there was no information on the number of children.

Childcare responsibilities prior to incarceration

Table 4 shows women's childcare responsibilities and the living arrangements of their children prior to incarceration. The difference between the proportion of women who were primary careproviders for their children in the two studies was not statistically significant [($\chi 2$ (1, N = 395) = 2.97, n.s.)]. In both studies, over half of the women with children had primary responsibility for their children prior to incarceration. Results from the *Survey* indicate that before incarceration, 62.4% of women with children lived full-time with at least one of their children either as a single parent or with a partner (children's father), whereas in the *OIAs Review*, the figure was 52.1%.

Table 4
Children's Living Arrangements Prior to Mothers' Incarceration[a]

	Survey of FSW (N=109)		OIAs Review (N=286)[b]	
	n	%	n	%
All grown up & live apart	8	(7.3)	34	(11.9)
At least one with her	58	(53.2)	99	(34.6)
With her and father	10	(9.2)	50	(17.5)
With ex-husband/common law[c]	10	(9.2)	30	(10.5)
With grandparents, etc.	12	(11.0)	38	(13.3)
With friend	3	(2.8)	2	(.7)
All in care/adopted out	8	(7.3)	14	(4.9)

Note. In the *OIAs Review*, some women may be represented more than once in certain categories, since childcare arrangements differed for some of their children. For that reason percentages do not sum to 100.
[a] In addition to the living arrangements listed in the *Survey* other arrangements were indicated in the *OIA Review* including: one or more lived with their relatives (17), in foster home/CAS (33), at least one adopted out at early age (28)
[b] In the case of 39 women, all information regarding their children was missing.
[c] In *OIAs Review* ex-husband/common law refers to the child's father. This was not specified in the *Survey*.

Survey results showed that out of those women who were primary careproviders for their child(ren) prior to incarceration (68 women), most mothers were single parents (58 women, or 85.3%), whereas a smaller number of women lived with their child(ren) and their child's father (10 women, or 14.7%). Compared to the *Survey*, in the *OIAs Review*, out of all the women who were primary careproviders for their children (149), a smaller proportion were sole parents (99 women, or 66.4%), whereas proportionally more women were living with their child(ren) and the child(ren)'s father (50 women, or, 33.5%). These differences were statistically significant [($\chi 2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 217) = 7.38, p> .01)], indicating that in the present study, a greater proportion of women who were primary careproviders for their children prior to incarceration lived with their child and partner (child's father), rather than as single parents.

Childcare arrangements during mothers' incarceration

Table 5 shows living arrangements for children during their mothers' incarceration for the sample of women in *OIAs Review* study. In some instances each of a woman's children may have different living arrangements. For instance, one of her children may be with his/her father, whereas another may be living with his/her grandparents. For that reason, the same woman may be represented more than once in Table 5.

Table 5
Children's Living Arrangements During Mothers' Incarceration

	OIAs Review (N=279)[a]	
	n	%
Children's grandparents	86	(30.8)
Children's father	75	(26.9)
Foster home/CAS ward	46	(16.5)
Relatives	43	(15.4)
Mother's friend	14	(5.0)
Step-father	2	(.7)
Grown up & live apart	34	(12.2)
All adopted out at early age	14	(5.0)
Other	12	(4.3)

Note. A woman may be represented more than once if she had different childcare arrangements for her children and for that reason percentages do not sum to 100.
[a] In the case of 46 women, there was no information for any of their children's living arrangements.

Given that the *Survey* did not provide numerical estimates of the childcare arrangements women had for their children during incarceration, a comparison of the two studies was not possible. However, the *Survey* stated that "following their mothers imprisonment, most adult children were now living on their own, and younger children were in the majority of cases being cared for by relatives - usually grandparents or grandmothers. The next most common arrangement was fostering, the remainder were with ex-husbands or ex-common law partners and a few with friends" (Shaw et al., 1990, p. 13). In the *OIAs Review*, the most frequent arrangement corresponded to that of the *Survey*, that is, grandparents were primary careproviders of at least one child in the case of 30.8% of women with children.

In most cases, the careproviders were the women's own parents or, even more frequently, just their own mothers. The second most common arrangement in this study was that at least one child lived with his/her father during the mother's incarceration. The third most common arrangement in the *OIAs Review* study was foster care.

These findings refer not only to children who lived with their mothers full time prior to incarceration, but also to those who had lived with someone other than the mother before she came into conflict with the law. In the latter case, living arrangements of these children did not change due to the mother's incarceration. On the other hand, some children went through major changes due to the fact that until their mother's incarceration, she was their only careprovider. In the case of those children who lived with both parents, some stayed with their fathers upon the mother's incarceration, whereas others were moved into different living arrangements.

Contacts with children during incarceration

Information in the OIAs' Domain Comments in most cases did not provide data on whether a woman was in contact with her child(ren) during incarceration. This type of data was reported for only 114 women, that is 35% of all women with children. It should not be interpreted that other women did not have contact with their children, but rather, that the OIAs did not provide information to determine the proportion of women who stayed in touch with their children during

incarceration. Out of those for whom this type of information was available, 67 women (58.8%) had contact with their child(ren), 29 women (25.4%) did not have contact with their children and 18 women (15.8%) planed to or were in the process of applying for Private Family Visits (meeting in private with family members/children in separate facilities).

Most of the Domain Comments in the OIAs did not specify the type of contact women had with their children throughout the period of their incarceration, but rather provided general comments such as, "... has a supportive and ongoing relationship with her children," or "...maintains regular contact with children." However, in some instances specific information on the type of contact was available. Based on that information, it appeared that visits and/or phone calls were the most frequent ways of maintaining contact with children. The frequency of phone calls and/or visits was in some instances also recorded and ranged from a phone call per day to an "occasional" phone call or visit every one or two months.

It seemed relevant to explore the extent to which those women who maintained contact with their children during this period were also involved in childcare prior to incarceration. Limited data allow only a rough estimate, but suggest that women who lived with their children prior to incarceration (either as single parents or with the child and his/her father) were more likely to have maintained contact with their children during incarceration. However, it is noteworthy that one third of those who maintained contact with their children

during incarceration most likely did not previously live with them full-time, as indicated in Domain Comments. A more complete set of data on this aspect of mothering is necessary, however, in order to have more confidence in the results.

There were other important aspects of mother-child contact during the mother's incarceration that bear examination. It was very clear that mothers were to a great extent dependent on others to "facilitate" their contacts with children. Consistent with the *Survey* findings, the *OIAs Review* also showed that in some instances, a positive and supportive relationship between the mother and her child's careprovider were reported in the Domain Comments of women's OIAs. There were also an entirely opposite situations described, in which the child's careprovider was reluctant to bring the child to the facility or assist the mother in maintaining contact with her child. Some Domain Comments clearly conveyed staff's sensitivity to women's needs regarding their roles as mothers. For instance, in some cases, it was documented that the institutional staff assisted women to get in touch with their children's foster parents, and that efforts were made to assist the child's transfer to another foster parent who lived closer to the institution. Other comments in the OIAs expressed the view that it would be "beneficial for the woman to apply for the Private Family Visits and maintain contact with her children," yet it was not clear whether this view reflected the mother's needs and plans, or rather what was assumed would be helpful for her. This needs to be explored further given the relevance of distinguishing between women's needs and

others' assumptions as to what their needs may be, with respect to maintaining contact with children.

Summary of the findings on parenting roles

In the *OIAs Review* study, there were significantly more women with children compared to the *Survey* sample. Contrary to the *Survey*, most of the women who had been primary careproviders for at least one of their children were not single parents but rather had lived with the child and his/her father (or her common law partner). In both studies, the most frequent careprovider of women's children during their incarceration, were the children's grandparents and most often the maternal grandmother. Data on whether mothers maintain contact with children were missing to a great extent, but based on what was reported, it appeared that most of the women with children maintained contact with them during incarceration.

Histories of Abuse

Information on abuse presented in the *Survey* referred to the frequency of abuse women had experienced, which ranged from "regularly (abused) over a long period of time" to "once or twice" or "never." The *Survey* also provided information regarding the type of abuse women had experienced, namely sexual and/or physical. The Domain Comments of OIAs did not include this type of information, and for that reason comparisons of the findings from OIAs and the *Survey* were not possible.

It should be stressed that differing methodologies used by these two studies impose limitations on the comparison of the findings, thus making it difficult, in some cases, to estimate trends. Information in the *Survey* was based on individual interviews with women specifically designed to collect data of this nature. On the other hand, the purpose of the OIA is to provide assessment of women's criminogenic needs (and risks) in order to designate adequate programs that would target these needs. It does not contain items that are specifically designed for assessing experiences of abuse. Thus, information on experiences of abuse provided in the OIAs is disclosed by the women in relation to discussion of other OIA need domains, such as: employment, marital/family, associates/social interaction, substance abuse, community functioning, personal/emotional orientation and attitude. Keeping in mind the context within which information on women's experiences of abuse was collected, it is clear that the findings on this

issue based on the records provided in the Domain Comments of women's OIAs should not be considered a precise nor thorough treatment of this issue.

Number of women who indicated experiences of abuse

Review of the Domain Comments showed that women indicated a variety of types of childhood/adolescent environments and adulthood experiences. Women's descriptions of their experiences ranged from very positive statements about their childhood/adolescence and adulthood, to those of extreme violence and abuse. The contents of the Domain Comments covering the abuse issue varied tremendously. Some provided only general statements referring to experiences of abuse, such as: "reports that she was abused as a child," "grew up in an abusive/dysfunctional family," "was abused by her common law partner," etc. Other Domain Comments, documented women's indications of the specific types of abuse they suffered (physical, emotional, sexual). Examples of the indicated experiences of abuse are provided in Appendix B. General statements of abuse, as well as those that refer to specific types of abuse experienced during childhood/adolescence and/or adulthood, were collapsed here in order to provide an estimate of the proportion of women for whom it was documented that they indicated having experienced abuse during some period in their lives. This estimation resulted in 78.8% of women in the *OIAs Review*.

In some Domain Comments it was pointed out that a woman did not want to talk about her experiences of abuse in greater detail, or that a woman was not able to remember anything more specific about these experiences. It should be noted that the *Survey* also indicated the possibility that some women may not remember abuse at all. For that reason, it is important to keep in mind that if a woman did not indicate abuse, it does not mean that she did not have this type of experience.

Categorizing indicated experiences was problematic and difficult at times. In some instances, it was noted that the woman stated she had no experiences of abuse and had a positive relationship with her parents. Yet, she would describe a dysfunctional family environment in which she would routinely witness violence and fighting between her parents and/or siblings. In other cases, documented accounts of a woman's childhood experiences conveyed that she felt loved, accepted and nurtured during her childhood and that she lived in a stable and supportive family environment. The woman herself would qualify her childhood experiences as positive. Thus, despite the extremely different life stories, in both instances the relationships were described as "positive" by the women. For this study, the first case was coded as "dysfunctional/abusive," and the latter case as "positive childhood experiences." One rationale for this distinction was that it seemed more relevant for the purposes of this study to differentiate those women who may have some issues from their childhood experiences to deal with

(although they may not call them experiences of abuse), from those who most likely do not, and whose childhood experiences may represent an "asset." Secondly, many of the women described experiences that they did not consider to represent abuse, such as neglect, rejection or witnessing violence which are in the literature identified as forms of abuse (Demare, 1996). This, combined with the fact that some women possibly need to redefine their experiences of abuse in order to survive them (and therefore may not define a certain experience as abuse), represented reasons for coding them as "experience of abuse." Finally, in some instances it was clear that women considered their childhood experiences as "positive" primarily in comparison to the extreme instances of abuse they experienced later on in their lives.

Keeping in mind the aforementioned difficulties and limitations of collecting data on the experiences of abuse by the method employed in the *OIAs Review*, it is not appropriate to conduct a statistical comparison of the findings from this study and those from the *Survey*. However, the percentage figures are similar. *OIA Review* showed that 78.8% of women indicated abuse. The *Survey* showed that "82% (84) of the women in PFW had been either physically or sexually abused and 72% (49) of those in the provinces" (p.30). Thus, although the possibility of comparing results of these two studies is very limited, it is nevertheless clear that they both indicate that a proportion of women who had experienced abuse is very high.

Finally, it should be noted that not all documented references women made in relation to their childhood and adulthood experiences necessarily referred to experiences of abuse, and as previously mentioned, some women conveyed that they had very positive relationships. These positive relationships were also coded in the present study.

Indicated childhood/adolescent experiences of abuse

Table 6 shows that a total of 60.5% of women for whom information on childhood/adolescent experiences was available indicated abuse. A general indication of abuse was given by 22.1% of women, whereas 38.4% of women indicated specific types of abuse they suffered during childhood/adolescence.

Table 6
Indications of Women's Childhood/Adolescent Experiences

	OIAs Review (N=385)[a]	
	n	%
General statements of abuse	85	(22.1)
Specific type(s) of abuse	148	(38.4)
No experiences of any abuse	73	(19.0)
Positive/supportive environment	66	(17.1)
Experiences characterized in other ways	13	(3.4)

Note. [a] Information on childhood/adolescence experiences was missing for 41 women.

Although others who made some reference to their childhood/adolescence experiences did not refer to them in terms of abuse, it is important to keep in mind

that the absence of naming them as abuse does not necessarily mean that abuse did not occur.

Table 7 shows specific types of abuse that 38.4% of women indicated. Physical and sexual abuse were noted in over 60% of cases, and it was also clear that many women suffered multiple types of abuse.

Table 7
Indicated Types of Abuse in Childhood/Adolescence

	OIAs Review (N=148)[a]	
	n	%
Physical	100	(67.6)
Sexual	94	(63.5)
Emotional	53	(35.8)

Note. A woman may be represented more than once and for that reason percentages do not sum to 100.
[a] Information on childhood/adolescent experiences was missing for 41 women. In the case of 85 women, only a general indication of abuse was provided and they were not included in this table.

In some instances, information on the abuser was also available. Based on the limited information available, it seems that in the case of physical abuse, fathers were the most frequent abusers, followed by mothers and then both parents. In the case of sexual abuse, the most frequently perpetrators were: relatives, more than one family member, and others (babysitters, neighbors, etc.). Emotional abusers were most frequently mothers, followed by fathers.

It is clear that experiences coded as "specific types of abuse" represent a very heterogeneous group. In some cases, abusers were close family members and

the abuse occurred repeatedly within a violent and unstable family atmosphere. In other instances, abusers were not known, or not well known, to the woman, and she may have otherwise lived in a fairly stable family environment. This becomes relevant given that information on the contexts within which the abuse occurred may shed additional light on the meaning and the consequences that the abuse may have for women. However, given the insufficient information, it was not possible to explore this issue further in this study.

Runaways and foster homes

In the case of 52 women, it was indicated that they ran away from home before they were of legal age. In most cases, women's running away from home was associated with dysfunctional/abusive homes. Their subsequent experiences upon leaving home indicated that running away from home in many instances only exposed the women to further abuse and to different abusers, and did not create a change toward a safer living environment. There was also a smaller number of women who stated that they did not experience any type of abuse in the environment where they grew up, yet they ran away from home. The stated reasons for running away from home were mostly "to accompany friends" and "to see what it was like to be on your own." Given the small sample size and often incomplete data on this issue on one hand, and the potential relevance of these events to women's lives on the other, a greater in-depth examination of the

relationship between the quality of childhood environments and the likelihood of women's running away from home needs to be pursued.

It was documented for 77 women that they were removed from their parental homes to live in foster homes for part or most of their childhood. Exploration of the reasons for foster care arrangements shows that during their childhood, women were often apprehended and placed in foster care due to neglect or abuse they suffered from their parent(s). However, in some cases, it was stated that a woman was a difficult child with behavioral problems, and/or the parents themselves asked for a child to be put into a foster home because they could not deal with her. In some instances, women conveyed that they were a "burden" to their parent(s) and/or that they were "sent" to a foster home for "disciplinary" reasons. These experiences may be of crucial relevance to women's lives. However, the available information was collected on a very small sample size, and needs to be explored further.

Indicated experiences of abuse in adulthood

Table 8 shows that altogether 75.4% of women for whom information was available indicated experiences of abuse in adulthood (i.e. gave a general statement or indicted a specific type of abuse). OIAs of a fairly high number of women (104 or 24.4% of the entire sample) contained no information about abuse during adulthood, which may affect the accuracy of the provided estimates.

Table 8
Indications of Women's Adulthood Experiences

	OIAs Review (N=322)[a]	
	n	%
General statements of abuse	90	(27.4)
Specific type(s) of abuse	158	(48.0)
No experience of any abuse	74	(22.5)

Note. [a] Information was missing for 104 women.

Types of indicated abuse experienced in adulthood are presented in Table 9. In many instances, women experienced multiple types of abuse, physical and verbal being the most frequent (38.6%).

Table 9
Indicated Types of Abuse in Adulthood

	OIAs Review (N=158)[a]	
	n	%
Physical and verbal	61	(38.6)
Physical	54	(34.2)
Verbal, sexual and physical	27	(17.1)
Verbal/emotional	12	(7.6)
Sexual	4	(2.5)

Note. [a] Information on adulthood experiences was missing for 104 women. In the case of 90 women, only a general indication of abuse was provided and they were not included in this table.

Available data, although very limited, suggest that women's abusers in adulthood were most frequently the women's (male) partners. Nevertheless, in reviewing the women's documented accounts of their relationships, two patterns emerged. In the case of approximately half of the women for whom information was available, all of their partners had been abusive. In the case of the other half, although they had experienced abusive relations with one (or some) partners, they also indicated experiences of warm and supportive relationships with others.

Accounts of substance abuse were almost inseparable from those on situations of abuse and violence. The most commonly reported themes were that women resorted to drinking/substance abuse in order to "make it through the day" and to survive the abuse they were exposed to. Another theme that was often present was that their abusers (in most instances partners) were heavy drinkers and would often force women to drink with them. In some instances, women themselves were violent towards their partners and they themselves depicted fights more as a two-way process, in which both sides participated in "attacking" or defending themselves. And finally, some women stated that once they started "fighting back," they noticed that the abuse decreased or stopped entirely.

The Aboriginal population and experiences of abuse

The *Survey* pointed out that abuse played "... a far more widespread part in the lives of native women" (Shaw et al., 1990, p.30), compared to non-native

women. It indicated that 90% of Aboriginal and 61% of non-Aboriginal women had been physically abused, whereas 61% of Aboriginal and 50% of non-Aboriginal women had been sexually abused. Tables 10 and 11 show findings from this study with respect to indicated childhood/adolescent and adulthood experiences of abuse in the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal sample.

Table 10 shows that in the *OIA Review* sample, 75.9% of Aboriginal women for whom information was available, indicated childhood/adolescent experiences of abuse (i.e. gave a general statement or described a specific type of abuse), whereas these experiences were indicated in the case of 55.6% of non-Aboriginal women. Also, a smaller percentage of Aboriginal women (10.8%) stated that they did not experience any type of abuse, compared to the non-Aboriginal women (21.6%).

Table 10
Indications of Childhood/Adolescent Experiences According to Aboriginal vs. Non-Aboriginal Status

	Aboriginal (N=83)[a]		Non-Aboriginal (N=282)[b]	
	n	%	n	%
General statements of abuse	21	(25.3)	56	(19.8)
Specific type(s) of abuse	42	(50.6)	101	(35.8)
No experiences of any abuse	9	(10.8)	61	(21.6)
Positive/supportive environment	8	(9.6)	54	(19.1)

Note. Information on racial backgrounds was not available for 21 women [general (8), specific (5), no abuse (3), positive (4), information on abuse not available (1)]
[a] Information was not available for 5 Aboriginal women.
[b] Information was not available for 35 non-Aboriginal women

As shown in Table 11, experiences of abuse during adulthood were indicated by 95.9% of the Aboriginal (i.e. gave a general statement or describe a specific type of abuse), whereas in the non-Aboriginal sample the figure was 72.4%. Only 4.1% of Aboriginal women and 27.6% of non-Aboriginal women stated that they did not experience any type of abuse during their adulthood.

Table 11
Indications of Adulthood Experiences According to Aboriginal vs. Non-Aboriginal Status

	Aboriginal (N=74)[a]		Non-Aboriginal (N=232)[b]	
	n	%	n	%
General statements of abuse	26	(35.1)	61	(26.3)
Specific type(s) of abuse	45	(60.8)	107	(46.1)
No experiences of any abuse	3	(4.1)	64	(27.6)

Note. Information on racial backgrounds was not available for 21 women [general (3), specific (6), no abuse (7), no information (5)].
[a] Information was not available for 14 Aboriginal women.
[b] Information was not available for 85 non-Aboriginal women.

A chi square analysis was performed to examine the differences between the two groups (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) in respect to the prevalence of abuse in childhood/adolescence and adulthood. Women's indications of specific types of abuse and their general statements on these experiences were collapsed into one category. A statistically significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women [($\chi 2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 365) = 10.13, p>.01)] was found, indicating that childhood abuse was to a considerably greater extent present, or indicated to

have been present, in the case of Aboriginal women, compared to non-Aboriginal. Similarly, significantly more Aboriginal women indicated or described experiences of abuse during adulthood [($\chi 2$ (1, $\underline{N}$ = 311) = 19.20, p> .001)]. These results should be interpreted with some caution since there was a high proportion of missing data for the non-Aboriginal sample (approximately 27%), which may have biased the results. However, the findings of this study are quite consistent with those of the *Survey* in clearly indicating that experiences of abuse were prevalent among incarcerated Aboriginal women in both samples.

Summary of the findings on experiences of abuse

The nature of the data on abuse provided in this study and the *Survey* varied considerably and therefore it was not possible to compare the two studies on many aspects of this issues. Nevertheless, results clearly indicate that a high proportion of women in both samples indicated having experienced abuse either during one part of their lives, or throughout their entire lives. Available data further suggested that in the *OIAs Review* study, most of the women who described specific types of abuse suffered it in multiple forms. Analyses of the differences between indicated experiences of abuse for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women showed that there were significantly more Aboriginal women who experienced or indicated having experienced abuse during childhood/adolescence as well as adulthood. This is

consistent with the findings of the *Survey* which showed that experiences of abuse were more prevalent among Aboriginal women.

DISCUSSION

OIAs Review study was to a great extent of an exploratory nature, with the main goal to document the current parental roles and experiences of abuse among women offenders. An attempt was also made to compare the findings of this study with those of the *Survey of Federally Sentenced Women* (Shaw et al., 1990), while keeping in mind the limitations of this comparison due to the different methods used in these two studies. These limitations, as well as suggestions as to areas where further research seems warranted, are presented bellow.

In the *Survey*, data were collected based on individual interviews with incarcerated women with the specific aim of gaining an understanding of the issues under consideration. On the other hand, the source of information for the current study consisted entirely of the Domain Comments of OIAs. This instrument is designed for a different purpose and it was not developed to assess issues of interest for this study, nor was it expected that its Domain Comments would contain detailed and specific information on issues of parenting and experiences of abuse. OIAs are used upon offenders' admission into an institution with the purpose of assessing their risk/needs in order to develop correctional plans and designate relevant programs. Thus, the OIA itself does not have any specific items or sections for collecting systematic data on women's experiences of abuse. If this information was present in the Domain Comments, it was primarily based on women's own spontaneous disclosure of these experiences. In the case

of most of the reviewed OIAs, at least some reference to childhood and adulthood experiences was found in the Domain Comments which allows a general estimate in respect to this issue. If more specific information on the experience of abuse is desired, a study addressing these particular issues is required.

Another limitation of this study is that data from the OIAs regarding various issues were missing to a greater or lesser extent. Although this was taken into consideration in calculating estimates (proportions), this should nevertheless be kept in mind, given that it may have affected the estimated patterns presented in this study. Missing data may have also created seemingly inconsistent results, such as for instance a slight difference in the percentage of adult children women have which was presented in Tables 4 and 5 (11.9%; 12.2% respectively).

Keeping in mind the aforementioned limitations and benefits of OIAs' Domain Comments review, the following conclusions can be offered. With respect to parenting roles, results of both the *Survey* and the *OIAs Review* showed that a vast majority of federally incarcerated women are mothers of minor children. Compared to the *Survey*, in the *OIAs Review* study a greater proportion of women were mothers. Most of the women in both samples had one to three children, but some had more. In both studies over half of the women (62.4% in the *Survey* and 52.1% in the *OIAs Review*) had primary responsibility for at least one of their children prior to offending.

There was a statistically significant difference between the two samples in respect to the living arrangements of those women who were primary careproviders for one or more of their children. There were proportionately more single mothers in the *Survey* sample, whereas in the *OIAs Review* sample among those who were primary careproviders for their children, proportionately more women had lived with both their child(ren) and partner.

A note should be made that in some instances it was very difficult to determine living arrangements and women's involvement in childcare. These difficulties did not stem from the manner in which the information was reported, but rather because the lives of some women were characterized by many sudden and unpredictable changes that were inevitably reflected in their childcare roles and in their children's living arrangements. This in turn, as is often the case when data need to be categorized and taken as a "snap shot", made it difficult to define the situation that best described the children's living arrangements. Due to the complex and often very difficult circumstances of women's lives, it was not always possible for them to maintain contact or keep their children with them all the time. Some women lost custody of some of their children due to substance abuse and/or mental health problems, as well as due to previous incarcerations. However, not all of the women's lives were subject to turmoil and instability. Reviewed OIAs clearly showed that for many women, their careproviding role and living arrangements were stable and secure.

With respect to childcare arrangements during the mothers' incarceration, both studies showed that most of the women relied on their children's grandparents, usually maternal grandmothers. In the *Survey* the second most frequent living arrangement was foster care, whereas in the *OIAs Review,* it was the father of the child(ren). However, it should be kept in mind that due to the nature of the data, it was not possible to examine whether this difference was statistically significant.

The second most frequent arrangement in this study, that is, the care of children by the father, may be associated with the fact that, compared to the *Survey*, in the *OIAs Review,* there was a greater number of women who had lived with their child(ren) and partner (children's father), than as single parents. Thus, it would be reasonable to assume that children would continue to live with their father upon the mother's incarceration. On the other hand, in some cases, children who lived with both parents prior to their mother's incarceration, did not remain to live with their father upon mother's incarceration. The complete data in some cases were missing, thus it was not possible to determine the extent to which and the underlying reasons why some children who lived with both parents changed residences upon their mother's incarceration.

Women's contacts with children during incarceration were also examined. Data here were limited. However, the information that was available suggests that the majority of women had contact with their children during incarceration. The

type of contact and whether the woman was the main childcare provider before incarceration, could not often be precisely determined. A rough estimate suggests that the most frequent types of contacts women had with their children were visits and/or phone calls, which in terms of frequency ranged from a phone call per day to an "occasional" call or visit every one or two months. It also appears that most of the women who maintained contact with their child(ren) had lived with them full-time before incarceration. However, it is noteworthy that there were also those women who most likely did not live with their children prior to incarceration, but nevertheless maintained contact with them during this period. It is clear that this issue needs to be examined more closely in future studies, as this may be of great relevance for assisting women with their mothering needs during incarceration.

It is possible that women who had different childcare arrangements prior to incarceration also have different needs in relation to mothering and contacting children during incarceration. It has been noted in the literature (Garcia Coll et al, 1998; Wine, 1992) that knowing that they have children on the "outside" and awareness of their role as mothers may represent a major motivation for change that "keeps them going". Even where a woman was not her child's primary careprovider prior to incarceration, being incarcerated and "re-examining" her life may lead her to establish contact with her child. This may raise different issues than in the case of those who were with children full-time prior to incarceration.

In order to identify these specific needs, and subsequently respond to them most effectively, the relationship between involvement in childcare prior to and during incarceration needs to be further explored.

It should also be mentioned that there is one very important aspect of the parenting issue that has not been addressed in this study (nor in the *Survey)* at all. It refers to the possible ways in which children may react to their mothers' incarceration. The literature suggests that such children may develop various behavioral problems, feel extremely ashamed, lack social support or react in many other problematic ways (Shaw, 1992; Stanton, 1980; Wine, 1992). Occasional references to children's reactions in some of the Domain Comments indicate that this could also be an important factor as to whether or not the child and the mother will maintain contact. Furthermore, difficulties encountered by children were identified in some Domain Comments as sources of women's concerns. Thus, in order to fully understand parenting issues for incarcerated women, information relating to the child and his/her circumstances need to be examined as well.

The second purpose of the *OIAs Review* was to examine available information on women's histories of abuse. Keeping in mind the possible inaccuracy of the provided estimates in respect to this issue, this review of the OIAs data, like the *Survey*, clearly showed that an extremely high proportion of women indicated having experienced abuse either in childhood or adulthood. In the *OIAs Review*, the Domain Comments of 78.8% of the women indicated that

women disclosed having been abused at some time in their lives, whereas in the *Survey,* 82% of the women in PFW, and 72% of those serving their sentences in provincial institutions reported abuse (Shaw et al., 1990). Reviewed OIAs' Domain Comments showed that a certain number of women also disclosed specific types of abuse suffered during childhood and adulthood. These clearly indicated that the women were often exposed to more than one type of abuse.

In both the *OIAs Review* and the *Survey*, experiences of abuse were more prevalent among Aboriginal than among non-Aboriginal women. The nature of the data precluded statistical comparisons between the two studies on this issue. However, for the sample of this study, a statistically significant difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women was found in respect to the disclosure of both childhood/adolescent and adulthood experiences of abuse. In both instances, these experiences were to a greater extent recorded for Aboriginal women.

The extremely high proportions of women who indicated suffering abuse in both studies shows the extent to which this issue is relevant and salient in this population, as has been previously documented (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Comack, 1996; Elisabeth Fry Society, 1994; Laishes, 1997). However, numbers and proportions can only convey certain aspects of the problems they address and are therefore inevitably limited (and limiting). Experiences of abuse that women conveyed which have been categorized and counted in the same way may in fact have very different meanings for those who experienced them, and may differ

widely in ways that cannot be captured numerically. Thus, a full appreciation of this problem including an understanding of its impact on women's perceptions of themselves and their lives and the survival mechanisms to which they resorted, would require situating these experiences in the context of their lives. This is clearly beyond the scope of this study.

Data from this study indicate that some women reported that they grew up in positive family environments. This finding is not often addressed in the literature. Similarly, some women reported having warm, positive and accepting relationships with partners during adulthood. In many instances, the same woman would report both positive as well as negative (i.e. abusive) experiences at different times in her life, or in relationships with different people at the same point in her life. This merits specific attention and examination in future research, since knowing the potential "strengths" and resources that women have may allow for a more holistic approach to promoting healing and recovery.

It was beyond the scope of the *OIAs Review* study to explore the relationship between the two sets of issues that were examined here, namely, women's parenting roles and their childhood and adulthood experiences of abuse. However, both the data itself, as well as themes that emerged from the review of the Domain Comments clearly indicate that there are many points of convergence in these two aspects of women's experiences. As has been already brought to attention in the literature, certain patterns women were exposed to during their

childhood may also emerge in their adult lives as well (Garcia Coll et al., 1998; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Johnston & Rodgers, 1993). Many women offenders grew up in poverty and were brought up by parents or parent-substitutes who had severe substance abuse problems (Chesney-Lind, 1997; Comack, 1996; Sommers, 1995) or were themselves involved with the justice system (Sommers, 1995; Stanton, 1980; Wine, 1992). These patterns have recurred in the adult lives of some of these women. However, in spite of the literature pointing out the possibility of intergenerational repetition of such patterns, not much research has been done on the specific determinants of these possible patterns. A greater in-depth exploration is needed, particularly one that would take the perspective of women's own subjectivities and situatedness.

Given the extremely high proportion of women who experienced various forms of abuse and dysfunction in their parental homes, it is of great relevance to examine the "internal models of parenting," that women may have developed under these circumstances. These "internal models" often represent guidelines for one's own parenting style and the relationship a parent establishes with his/her own children (Jenner & McCarthy, 1995). These models do not necessarily represent repetition of the parenting patterns to which one was exposed. They may also represent clear guidelines as to what a parent is determined not to repeat. As literature on "resiliency" indicates, there may be certain aspects in one's "dysfunctional" life that can moderate these effects and allow a person to develop

"resistance" (Gilgun, 1991; Valentine & Feinauer, 1993; Werner, 1986). It has therefore already been stressed that women's strengths should be studied together with their difficulties. Review of Domain Comments, as well as women's accounts documented elsewhere (Adelberg & Currie, 1991; Elizabeth Fry Society, 1994; Garcia Coll et al., 1998) indicate that some women are painfully aware that in spite of resisting as much as possible, they have repeated with their children some aspects of the unsatisfactory parenting they received from their parent/parental figures. But other women have stressed that precisely because they were exposed to negative parenting during their own childhood, they were determined (and managed) not to repeat the same pattern with their own children. It is relevant to understand the relationship between one's own parenting and the way an individual was parented as a child, given that relating to a child in a different way than a mother was parented herself, may have healing effect for the mother in relation to dealing with her own childhood experiences. This shows the potential benefits of future research to better understand the relationship between women's growing up experiences, the parenting they were exposed to as children, and the one they established with their own children. Knowing how women were parented and how these experiences affected their own parenting may be a crucial factor in assisting them with their mothering needs during incarceration and subsequent reintegration.

Approaching these problems entirely as expressions of individual personality and locating them solely within an individual would, however, be counterproductive. Certainly women's experiences need to be situated within their own "subjectivities" and understood as stemming from the contexts of their everyday lives as well as family backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

In general, *OIAs Review* has shown patterns of mothering and experiences of abuse among federally sentenced women similar to those identified in the *Survey*. The results clearly support the necessity to continue to assist women in dealing with issues that may stem from their histories of abuse, and in their roles as mothers. Correctional Service of Canada has recognized the importance of these issues for women and it is clearly reflected in the fact that both the Parenting Program as well as Survivors of Abuse/Trauma Programs represent core programs for women offenders. However, precisely because of the prevalence of these issues in women offenders, it would be beneficial to re-examine the extent to which these core programs, as currently designed, are effective as well as whether they are sufficiently targeting the specific needs that women offenders may have with respect to parenting and experiences of abuse. More specifically, in relation to abuse, the "Correctional Program Strategy for Federally Sentenced Women" (1994) outlines the necessity of provide both group work as well as individual therapy for women dealing with abuse and violence issues. However, given the significance of this issue and a high proportion of women to whom it may be relevant, more specific guidelines and greater analysis of women's needs and the appropriate correspondence with available treatment modalities seems to be lacking.

As to the Parenting Program, it is important to mention that the authors of the "Guidelines of Parenting Skills Programs for Federally Sentenced Women" state that "... there is virtually no information on the parenting styles or skills of Federally Sentenced Women" (1995, p.8), which in itself indicates the necessity of examining this issue in greater detail. However, parenting practices emerge and develop within a specific context. For that reason it is not sufficient to know solely about the parenting skills that women may have or may need to learn. These skills need to be assessed and understood in relation to women's notions of motherhood, how they perceive themselves as mothers and the ways in which their parenting practices are interwoven with their childhood experiences of being parented. In view of women's possible experiences and notions of parenting, it is clear that the parenting program needs to have a strong experiential component that will allow women to make connections between their parenting practices and their "internal models of parenting" stemming from their childhoods. Another aspect to be considered in connection to women's parenting skills (and needs) is the particular situation of their children in terms of possible behavioral and emotional reactions to their mothers' incarceration and the stigma associated with it.

In summary, given that the general trends regarding women's needs have now been identified with considerable confidence, in order to provide guidelines for a more holistic approach to the process of healing and reintegration, future

research is recommended. More in-depth studies should focus on and be more sensitive to the possible interactive effects of various aspects of women's lives. Thus, further research could usefully be done on the following:

- The likelihood that the patterns of parenting and childhood experiences to which women were exposed shape their own relationships with children and affect mother and child, both during incarceration and in subsequent reintegration;
- The connections between childcaring patterns before incarceration and women's needs to maintain or establish contact with children during incarceration, with a view to determining the different needs and psychological challenges faced by women according to their circumstances; and
- The possible specific qualities of the experiences of abuse (and therefore needs) that may characterize this population, given the extremely high incidence of reported experiences of abuse among women offenders.

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APPENDIX A

Coding Guide

FPS # _____
Last Name _____
Age _____

Parenting Roles

1. Gave birth ___Yes ___ No ___ No information

2. Number of children gave birth to _____

3. Child(ren) adopted out at birth or early age ___All ___ At least one ___None

4. Age of children (who are not adopted out) at the time of Intake
(enter number of children beside appropriate age group)
_____ 5 or under
_____ 16 or under
_____ 17 and older
_____ no information

5. Prior to mother's incarceration, children lived with
(enter number of children beside appropriate living arrangement)
___ All grown up and live apart
___ Mother single
___ Mother and her partner/child's father
___ Father
___ Grandparent(s): ___maternal ___paternal
___ Mother's friend
___ All in care/adopted out
___ Relatives (father/mother's sister, uncles, etc.)
___ Foster care/CAS ward
___ Other (_____)
___ No information

6. During mother's incarceration, children are in care of:
(enter number of children beside appropriate living arrangement)
___ All grown up and live apart
___ Grandparent(s): ___maternal ___paternal
___ Father
___ Step-father
___ Foster care/CAS ward
___ Mother's friend
___ Relatives (father/mother's sister, uncles, etc.)
___ Other (_____)
___ No information

7. During incarceration mother:
___ has no contact with child(ren)
___ maintains contact (what kind? _____)
___ plans to apply for Private Family Visit
___ no information

Experiences of Abuse

1. Childhood/adolescence experiences:

___ States or describes growing up in an abusive, dysfunctional environment

___ States or describes growing up in a positive/supportive environment

___ States that she did not experience any kind of abuse

Conveys experiences of:

____ Physical abuse

Abuser(s):
____ Mother
____ Father
____ Step parent
____ Foster parent
____ Sibling(s)
____ Relatives
____ Teacher(s)
____ Family friend(s)
____ Partner
____ Other

____ No information

____ Verbal/emotional abuse Abuser(s): ____ Mother
____ Father
____ Step parent
____ Foster parent
____ Sibling(s)
____ Relatives
____ Teacher(s)
____ Family friend(s)
____ Partner
____ Other
____ No information

____ Sexual abuse Abuser(s): ____ Mother
____ Father
____ Step parent
____ Foster parent
____ Sibling(s)
____ Relatives
____ Teacher(s)
____ Family friend(s)
____ Partner
____ Other
____ No information

_____ No information on childhood/adolescence experiences

2. Ran away from home before age 18
____ Yes _____ No ____ No information

3. Lived in foster home/was apprehended by social services as a child
____ Yes _____ No ____ No information

4. Adulthood experiences

____ Gives a general statement on having experienced abuse (unspecified experiences of abuse)
Abuser: ____ partner ____ other (_____)

_____ States that she did not experience any kind of abuse

Reports:
_____ Physical abuse
Abuser: ____ partner ____ other (_____)

____ Verbal/emotional abuse
Abuser: ____ partner ____ other (_____)

____ Sexual abuse
Abuser: ____ partner ____ other (_____)

Relationships qualified as:

___ All abusive ___ Some abusive ____ Positive _____ No information

_____ No reference to experiences of abuse in adulthood

APPENDIX B

Coding Examples

In order to provide examples of coding procedure, composite profiles were constructed to protect confidentiality while still maintaining essential information regarding women's lives. To this end, none of the following examples represent any single case recorded in the Domain Comments.

Codes	Content examples
Lived in foster home/was apprehended by Social Services **Childhood/adolescence experiences:** • Grew up in abusive environment	At the age of 6 Mary was placed into foster care as her parents were neglecting her due to abusing alcohol.
Childhood/adolescence experiences: • Physical abuse, abuser: foster parents • Emotional abuse, abuser: foster parents **Adulthood experiences:** • General statement on abuse, abuser: partner	Ann indicates that during her childhood she was subject to both physical and emotional abuse at the hands of her foster parents. She describes she was involved in a common law relationship where she suffered many forms of abuse.
Childhood/adolescence experiences: • Grew up in abusive environment	Sara states that she was raised in abusive environment, as her stepfather was both emotionally and physically abusive towards her mother, although he was not abusive towards herself.

Childhood/adolescence experiences: • Grew up in abusive environment **Adulthood experiences** • General statement on abuse, abuser: partner	File information documents an established need for psychological treatment/counselling in this case to address unresolved issues related to her history of childhood/spousal abuse.
During mother's incarceration children live with: • Grandparents (1); natural father (1) **During incarceration mother:** maintains phone contact with a child **Adulthood experiences:** • mental abuse, abuser: partner • physical abuse, abuser: partner **Relationships qualified as:** • some abusive	Kate's 7 year old daughter has been living with her paternal grandparents since age one. Kate is currently in telephone contact with her. The father of her daughter was mentally and physically abusive towards Kate Her second daughter lives with her natural father. Kate states that this was a positive common-law relationship.